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A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF EDUCATION FOR RURAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

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LARGER SCHOOL DISTRICTS USUALLY HAVE BETTER INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS. TO HAVE A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM, HOWEVER, IT IS NECESSARY TO HAVE PROGRAM GUIDES THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS. THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SHOULD EMPHASIZE READING, WRITING, ARITHMETIC, AND SOCIAL STUDIES. A FLEXIBLE PROGRESSION OF GENERAL EDUCATION, COLLEGE PREPARATION, AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SHOULD CONSTITUTE THE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM. A SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PROGRAM WOULD INCLUDE ADULT EDUCATION, LIBRARY SERVICES, RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, AND SUMMER PROGRAMS. THE ADMINISTRATION SHOULD ALSO PROVIDE SERVICES WHICH WOULD HELP THE TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND ADMINISTRATION. THIS PAPER WAS PREPARED FOR PRESENTATION AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PROBLEMS OF RURAL YOUTH IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT (SEPTEMBER 1963). (JS)

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ABSTRACT

A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF EDUCATION FOR RURAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Considerable attention must be given to the specifications that constitute a comprehensive program of education to meet the needs of the school population in the rural and rural-related communities of modern America.

It is one of the facts of life that the size of the school district and the size of the schools within the districts largely determine whether a satisfactory instructional program is offered. Specific guiding standards, supported by the best extant research, are herein presented.

A comprehensive program of education on the elementary school level includes instructional opportunities in: the fundamental skills (the three R's), communicating, living together, the material and natural environment, enriching and beautifying life, manual skills, and citizenship.

On the high school level a comprehensive program should include: a general program, a college-entrance curriculum, and a program of vocational education which should include agriculture, business, homemaking and industry.

In addition to the specifics for elementary and high schools there are certain overall specifications of a comprehensive educational program. Included in these specifics are a school-community program which includes as minima: adult education, library services, recreational activities, and summer activities.

There are certain services of an overall nature usually furnished through the administrative unit (the school district) or an intermediate unit (see Working-paper number 11, by Dr. Alvin Rhodes). Such services can be classified into three major categories: services focused on the needs of children, services which help teachers to meet the needs of pupils, and services related to administration.

The services related to the needs of pupils include: supervision of attendance, guidance and counselling, health services, library, audio-visual equipment and services, special teachers, and special services and instruction for exceptional children.

The services which help teachers meet the needs of pupils include: supervision of instruction, inservice education of teachers, professional library services, curricular services, instructional and audio-visual materials.

The services related to administration include: personnel, business, school plant, pupil transportation, research, evaluation of the educational program, and coordination of educational programs among communities.

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INTRODUCTION

All too often the scope and quality of educational offering to rural children and youth are not sufficient to meet their needs in today's world. Consideration must be given to the specifications that constitute a comprehensive program of education and every effort should be made to make certain that it is made available to all American children and youth. Our particular concern here is with specifications for rural areas where the deficiencies seem to be the greatest.

The specifications of an educational program originate and become meaningful in relation to the educational needs of the pupils and the community served. The specifics in a program are likely to vary, as they properly should from community to community. They should be as similar or as different as the problems and resources of communities are similar or different.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SATISFACTORY SCHOOLS

Size of Schools

The schools that best perform the functions required of them have certain characteristics which experience and research have indicated to be fundamental. It follows that schools that do not have these characteristics cannot adequately perform the required functions. Analysis of a satisfactory operating program reveals that a curriculum is offered, a type of organization--a six-year elementary school, a three-year junior high school, or some other arrangement--is provided; there is a certain number of teachers with a certain number of pupils consistent with efficient teaching; a school plant with certain essential equipment is in use; apparatus and instructional materials of certain kinds are available; there is an adequate length of school term; and transportation facilities are provided for the pupils who need such service. These characteristics, if maintained to sufficiently high standards, will constitute a satisfactory school.

Regardless of how many persons would like to have it different, it remains a fact that the size of the school largely determines whether a satisfactory instructional program is offered. The minimum acceptable standards as to size of school can be very succinctly stated: 1/

1. For each elementary school there should be enough pupils so that at least one teacher for each grade can be economically provided. In a six-year elementary school it is desirable to have 300 or more pupils. There is probably little to be gained educationally by having elementary schools with more than 380 pupils.

2. For each high school there should be enough pupils to provide at least 100 pupils in the twelfth grade (graduating class). Accordingly there should

be in each junior high school a minimum of 360 pupils in grades seven to nine, and a minimum of 330 pupils in grades 10 to 12. Drop-outs are not a healthy characteristic. The optimum size of high school is from 700 to 1200 pupils.

These standards will require the transportation of many pupils living in rural areas. With but few exceptions elementary pupils should not have to travel more than 45 minutes, and high school pupils not more than one hour each way between home and school.

Size of Satisfactory Administrative Units 2/

These propositions concerning communities and neighborhoods and travel time as related to school organization are in apparent conflict with the idea that the size of an administrative unit or of an attendance unit is a valid criterion for determining a satisfactory unit of school organization. The fact that some communities and some neighborhoods may be too small to afford the number of pupils required for economical and effective administrative or attendance units, as the case may be, really has nothing to do with the validity of standards as to the size of satisfactory local school units. It frequently happens in all social fields that equally valid principles come into conflict at some point and under some circumstances. Such situations call for statesmanlike compromises and that is exactly what should happen in the development and reorganization of administrative and attendance units.

If because of real conditions, and for valid reasons, the standards of size cannot be attained, then the next best thing should be done: the smaller units should be established with the full realization that they can perform the work required of them only at excessive cost of money and human resources. Under the American doctrine of equality of opportunity the excess cost is easily justifiable.

What are acceptable standards of the size of satisfactory local units of school administration? A number of well-recognized studies on this question have been made and published during the last two decades. The standards have been developed both theoretically and in terms of actual conditions in school organization and administration. In either case the fundamental answer has been sought in terms of the functions an administrative unit is supposed to perform, the services and personnel necessary to the performance of the required services, and the cost of those services in relationship to the total budget of the unit. The question is: What is the minimum size of an administrative unit that can economically do the work required of it?

The pioneer study of this problem was made by the author of this chapter in 1934. Later studies were by Briscoe, the United States Office of Education staff of the Local School Units Project and the staff in each of the 10 participating states, Mort and Cornell, and the National Commission on School District Reorganization.

All the studies reached substantially the same conclusion as that expressed by the National Commission on School District Reorganization after its own study and an analysis of previous studies. The Commission concluded that a satisfactory school district should be at least large enough to offer an educational

program beginning with the kindergarten and extending through grade 12; and that it should have at least 1,200 pupils between the ages of six and eighteen and at least 40 teachers. If it has a much smaller number, it can offer a good program only at relatively great cost per pupil. The Commission also concluded that the more pupils a district has up to 10,000, the broader the program it can offer at reasonable cost. If the enrollment is much below 10,000, the district should be associated with one or more other districts in a larger intermediate district in order to supplement its services.

The Commission also pointed out that wherever possible it is desirable that the administrative unit be sufficiently large to permit the offering of a program of secondary education extending through grade 14.

SPECIFICATIONS OF A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM 3/

Elementary Schools

A comprehensive program of elementary education is designed for children from kindergarten age through the sixth grade. The program includes as a minimum instructional offerings in the following areas:

1. The Fundamental Skills. Skill in understanding and using the tool subjects (the three R's) should be acquired by continuous and purposeful use. Direct and specific teaching for this purpose is necessary; skill in ideas and processes already understood in order to increase proficiency and assure retention is a necessary and inherent part of the curriculum.

2. Communicating. Provision should be made for acquiring proficiency in the language arts, especially oral and written English, reading, and an appreciation and understanding of literature. Beginnings should also be made in developing an appreciation for other modern languages.

3. Living Together. The school itself should be an experience in desirable social living. The sharing of experiences in group activities is important and should be looked upon and treated as an essential aspect of the curriculum. The social studies - especially history, geography, and civics (probably in a unified program of social studies rather than as separate subjects) - constitute the basic subject matter of this field.

4. The Material and Natural Environment. Developing an understanding of the physical world, including the physical qualities and needs of people, should be a major sector of the elementary-school curriculum. Necessary to such an understanding are subject matter and instructional activities in arithmetic, health, physical education (with emphasis on play, games, and other recreational activities of a physical nature), safety knowledge and practices, and the physical and natural sciences. Special attention should be given to the conservation of natural and human resources.

5. Enriching and Beautifying Life. Instruction and other activities that lead to understanding, appreciation, enjoyment, and some skill in the use of music, literature, dramatics, painting, drawing, modeling, and designing should be amply provided in the elementary-school curriculum.

6. Manual Skills. Appropriate instruction and other activities in the manual arts should be provided. Skill in the use of the hands should be provided through the use of tools. Activities should include simple and elementary experiences in the industrial arts, including woodworking, metal working, handicrafts, painting, electrical work, mechanical repair work, and ordinary home repairs.

7. Citizenship. An understanding and appreciation of United States citizenship should be developed through both instruction and experience. This should be begun in the early years of the elementary-school program and continued throughout in a manner appropriate to the developmental level of the children. It should include the traditions and ideals which undergird our form of government, the individual and group responsibilities which citizenship involve, and the attitudes and values necessary for democratic process.

Essential to the development of an adequate elementary-school program are the following:

1. Organizing and implementing the educational program through provisions for: early childhood education (especially the kindergarten); supervision that is characterized by leadership and cooperative, democratic work with teachers; a wide variety and sufficient quantity of instructional materials and supplies, textbocks and libraries; adaptations to individual differences and needs, provisions for handicapped children; and the creation of a classroom atmosphere characterized by aesthetic appearance, flexibility of arrangement, democratic relationships, purposeful activities, and responsibility and recognition for everybody.

2. Guiding pupil growth through home, school, and community relations, including parent education, desirable parent and teacher relationships, parents' organization and parent-teacher associations, and activities related to community life.

3. Guiding pupil growth through recording, evaluating, and reporting to pupils and parents.

High Schools

A comprehensive program of secondary education will include as a minimum the program for Grades 7 through 12. The time is rapidly approaching when the scope of secondary education may also include Grades 13 and 14. The particular plan of division of these grades for organizational purposes is not of special significance to this discussion. Organization may be 6, or 3-3, or, 3-3-2, or 2-4, or 4-4. The program through Grade 12 should certainly provide the following opportunities as a minimum:

1. A General Program. The attitudes, knowledges, skills, habits, and ideals developed in the elementary school should be continued in the secondary school to the end that the various abilities needed for dealing wisely with the problems of daily living will be acquired. In addition, the pro-

gram should offer special opportunities to learn about the practice skills in safety, conservation of human and natural resources, family and community living, international understanding and self-government.

2. A College-Entrance Curriculum. Adequate opportunities should be provided for those who expect to attend higher institutions of learning in order to extend their general education or for preparation to enter the study of law, medicine, architecture, engineering, teaching, agriculture, business administration, or other professions.

3. Vocational Education. Opportunities should be provided for those who expect to take additional training for semi-professional and skilled occupations, for those who do not expect to go beyond the secondary school in their formal education, and for those who drop out before completing the twelfth grade. Such education should provide, in addition to the general program described above, the basic skills and knowledge necessary to enable those students to enter directly into employment sufficiently remunerative to provide a living and also enable them to make adjustments and acquire the new knowledge and skill necessary for advancement in their chosen occupations. The vocational curriculum should be related to any unique vocational opportunities in the area or region as well as the more usual vocational fields.

For example, it might at least include:

a. Agriculture: to prepare for farming, for becoming established in farming, and for farm management. Programs should be based primarily on the types of farming found in the area or region where the school is located. They should include the basic scientific information and skills in agriculture, production, management, marketing, buying, and the use and upkeep of farm equipment. For the students entering service occupations for rural people, instruction in such occupations as food and farm machinery salesmanship, dairy management, greenhouse and nursery management, and food processing is needed.

b. Business: to develop economic literacy on the part of everyone in such matters as savings, investments, insurance, and the management of the family budget. Programs should be sensitive to the special needs and opportunities of the area in business employment. Instruction for the preparation of clerks, typists, bookkeepers, and stenographers should be provided as needed. Instruction related to the business problems of farm management should be included, as well as opportunities in special business problems as may be needed and desirable.

c. Homemaking: (for boys as well as girls) to prepare for making and managing a superior home, including sewing, cooking, child care, nutrition, home decoration, and personal and family relationships. Special preparation for employment as cooks, chefs, seamstresses, housekeepers, practical nurses, and related occupations may well be needed.

d. Industry: to prepare for a variety of semi-skilled and skilled occupations. As a minimum the program should provide occupational orientation in construction, manufacturing, and transportation, and for

local service occupations such as those in the telephone system, the distribution and use of electricity, refrigeration, central heating, and air conditioning, and radio and television. Small communities really need good mechanics, carpenters, and "jacks-of-all-trades."

OVERALL SPECIFICATIONS OF A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

A School-Community Program

Every school system serving rural people should conduct its program to the end that the school actually contributes to general community improvement. Among the services that should be provided are the following:

1. Adult Education. Appropriate programs should be available to all adults who wish to extend their preparation in vocational fields, desire to improve their general informational or cultural knowledge and skills, or wish to develop avocations or hobbies.

2. Library Services. If no library is available in the community, the school may appropriately develop a service for adults as well as for the pupils in school. Where library services are available (private, county, city, or state) the school should cooperate in a manner which makes the existing services of maximum possible value to the community.

3. Recreational Activities. Recreational programs should be provided for all groups not otherwise provided for, through use of the school gymnasium, auditorium, playgrounds, and other facilities.

4. Summer activities. Included in the school's summer program may be a play and athletics program, classes in hobbies, music, art, drama, industrial arts, handicraft, a summer music festival, a summer dramatics festival, and (if not adequately provided for commercially) motion pictures.

Services Focused on the Needs of Pupils

Every comprehensive school program should have available from some convenient and economical sources certain well recognized and highly specialized services which are necessary to insure the effectiveness of the elementary, secondary, and school-community programs. Among these specialized services are the following which serve pupils directly:

1. Supervision of Attendance. Adequate records and accurate pupil accounting, adherence to state and local school-attendance laws and regulations, and social and educational case work are necessary. Such work should be performed by well prepared and experienced persons, preferably those trained and experienced as teachers and social case workers.

2. Guidance and Counseling. Services to pupils regarding personal, educational, and vocational needs and problems should be provided. Important adjuncts to this type of opportunity are psychological and psychiatric services by specialists in those fields.

3. Health Services. Specialized supervision of health instruction, medical and dental inspection, immunization, prevention and control of infections and contagious diseases, and physio-therapy, as well as a program including safety education, accident prevention, and school lunches should be available as necessary and desirable. Such services require the availability of professional personnel such as doctors, dentists, dental hygienists, school health nurses, physio-therapists, dieticians, and physical education specialists.

4. Library Services and Materials Bureau. Books for pupils and teachers, other printed matter, pictorial collections, models, objects, and museum exhibits are essential to an adequate educational program. In the absence of other adequate public library services for the community, the school system should provide such services. The materials indicated here are usually too numerous, too varied, and often too rare and expensive for a single school, especially a small one, to collect, store, and pay for. Competent supervision is needed for such services. Mobile units, such as the bookmobile, are usually necessary adjuncts to this service in rural areas.

5. Audio-Visual Equipment and Services. Modern teaching requires a wealth of audio-visual equipment and materials. Such equipment and materials can be supplied through a central administrative or service unit under the supervision of one or more professional persons who are experienced as teachers, are expert in the operation and use of such equipment and materials, and can effectively assist teachers.

6. Special Teachers. Instruction and activities in such areas as art, music, physical education, manual arts, and crafts require teachers with special professional training. The special abilities of these teachers should be used to assist the regular classroom teachers both with their instruction in the particular specialized area as well as in supplementing and relating these special activities to other aspects of the curriculum. These special teachers should also provide direct instruction in the advanced courses in their respective areas. School systems having two or more relatively small schools (or two or more small school systems) may need to provide circuit or itinerant teachers who serve more than one school.

7. Special Services and Instruction for Exceptional Children. The number of exceptional children in many schools and communities is likely to be so small that the districts concerned cannot afford the financial cost of giving those pupils the educational opportunities that they need and that society needs them to have. Neither can their special needs be ignored. An estimate of the extent of handicaps is reflected in the following Table. (Table on page 8)

Excluding the hard of hearing, many of whom with some special assistance may fully participate with normal children, it is certain that at least 12.5 percent of the school population may be expected to have definite handicaps. In many instances the services needed will have to be provided by some administrative or service unit larger than the local school.

TABLE I

Estimated Percent and Number of Exceptional Children Found in the School Population 1/

Percent	Type of Exception	Number of exceptional children in each 1000 school population
0.2	Blind and partially sighted	2
1.5	Deaf	15
3.5	Hard of Hearing	35
1.0	Crippled	10
1.5	Delicate	15
1.6	Speech Defective	16
2.0	Mentally Retarded	20
0.2	Epileptic	2
2.5	Behavior Problems - Socially Unadjusted	25
2.0	Mentally Gifted	20
16.0	Are Exceptional	160

Services Which Help Teachers Meet the Needs of Pupils

A clear delineation with respect to the benefits of any particular specialised service is difficult since in most instances a given service or program is more comprehensive in its influence. For the sake of discussion, however, certain services may be identified as primarily intended for the aid of teachers.

1. Supervision of Instruction. Teachers need the assistance and stimulation of expert, democratic, professional supervision. Perhaps the best term to describe such service is "helping teacher" or "consultant". Supervision should be regarded as a process involving many people and in this sense is of the general rather than the subject-matter type, although as has been previously indicated, there is need also for specialised supervisory assistance. Experience and best practice seem to indicate that there should be at least one supervisor or helping teacher for each 30 classroom teachers, at both elementary--and secondary--school levels. It is the opinion of many authorities in educational administration that a ratio of one such supervisor for each 25 to 30 teachers would be much more in keeping with the job to be done, especially in instances where the specialist serves several independent school districts involving travel, differing educational philosophies, etc.

2. Inservice Education for Teachers. Improving professional competence is a continuous and universal need. Opportunities and facilities should be made available through supervisory assistance and also through cooperative enterprises of teachers organized under and stimulated by professional leadership possessing the requisite resources.

3. Professional Library Services. Teachers, if they are to keep abreast of modern developments and trends in education, need access to professional

materials. Supervision and inservice education are highly dependent upon the availability of standard and current professional literature. Such literature and materials should be available and readily accessible.

4. Curricular Services. Curriculum development is a continuous process that affects all the activities of a school or a school system. It is a process by which state requirements regarding the curriculum are made effective at the local level, while at the same time adjustments and additions are made to fit the needs of the pupils and community where teaching takes place. Curriculum coordination among the schools of an area is needed. Such coordination is essentially a function of a unit of school administration larger than most school systems. Essential to curriculum services are a curriculum laboratory equipped with sufficient and appropriate materials and consultants in specialized aspects of the curriculum. The function of curriculum development and adjustment also involves a number of facilities and services previously identified -- supervision of instruction, guidance and counseling, attendance supervision, health and physical education and recreational services, library and materials bureau services, audio-visual materials services, special education for fields as art, music, manual arts, and crafts, and trade, vocational, industrial, homemaking, and business education.

5. Instructional and Audio-Visual Materials. As previously indicated, the use of many types of special materials and equipment is essential to good teaching. The wealth of such materials needed for a comprehensive educational program is usually greatly underestimated. If teachers are to meet the needs of pupils, the materials and equipment necessary must be made available.

Services Related to Administration

It is well recognized that the efficient and economical operation of a comprehensive program of instruction and related services requires certain administrative and business services. The sole purpose of such services is to make possible and to facilitate the educative activities of teachers and pupils. Without them it is hardly possible for educational objectives to be attained. Among these essential services are the following:

1. Personnel Services. A great deal of care in the selection, retention, promotion, and remuneration of teachers and other essential personnel is necessary to facilitate the operation of a comprehensive program of education.

2. Business Services. Budget making, accounting, purchasing, contract making and execution, and legal procedures are essential activities, often extremely complex. Frequently they are beyond the scope and facilities of a single school or school district.

3. School-Plant Services. The planning of school buildings, the alteration and adjustment of physical facilities to meet changing educational needs,

the maintenance of school property, adequate sanitary upkeep, and the continuous maintenance of physical conditions necessary to the health and physical safety of pupils and teachers are services which should be available to all schools at all times.

4. Pupil Transportation Services. The transportation of pupils is usually a necessity in community school systems. Such services include: the purchase of equipment; maintenance essential to conservation of property and the health and safety of pupils; the selection, training, and supervision of bus drivers; the planning of bus routes for the most economical use of facilities consistent with the health, safety, and reasonable convenience of pupils; and the administration of transportation facilities for purposes other than merely getting pupils to and from school, that is, for essential educational and school-related community activities.

5. Research Services. Research is increasingly essential to the adequate functioning of a school system. The kind of research needed is that related to the pupils, teachers, community needs, and the business and administrative affairs of the school system concerned. Personnel and facilities for research activities should be continuously provided.

6. Evaluation of the Educational Program. Every aspect of the educational program must be examined continuously in an effort to determine in what respects it can be improved. Results must be appraised and the effectiveness of the manner in which educational services are provided should be studied. Specific needs change from time to time and the educational organization must be alert to these shifts so that the program can be adapted appropriately. Evaluation should be directed almost exclusively to the job of improving the operating program.

7. Coordination of Educational Programs among Communities. Some degree of coordination is a continuous need. It involves curriculum adjustments and unification of objectives, and mutual assistance and cooperative efforts in all programs where large-scale efforts will best serve the needs of pupils, teachers, and community patrons.

FOOTNOTES

1/ Butterworth, Julian E. and Dawson, Howard A. The Modern Rural School, 1952, Chapter 19, pp 338-349, particularly pp 338-344.

2/ Idem.

3/ Department of Rural Education, National Education Association. The Community School and the Intermediate Unit, pp 5-14, 1954.

4/ Idem. p. 13.